

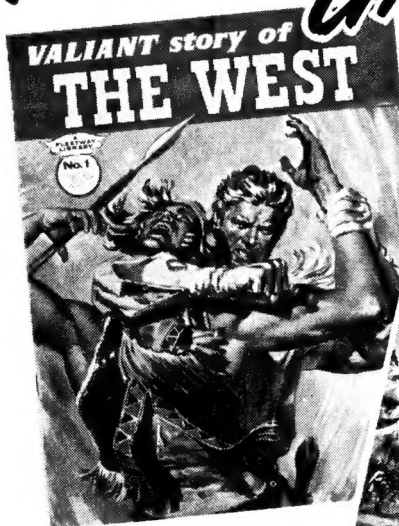
Relentlessly the Catalina stalked its prey – then pounced !



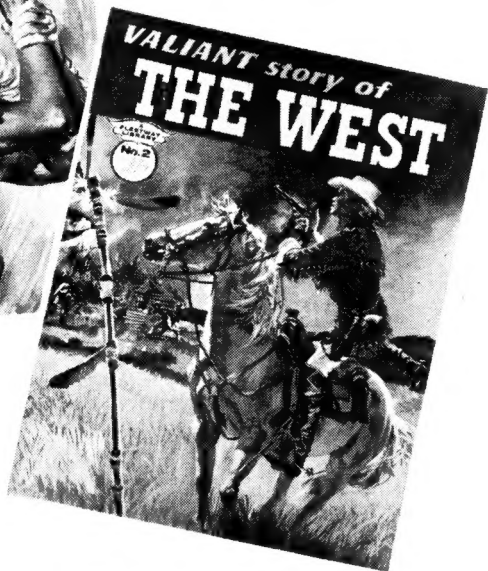
SUB HUNTER



THEY DARED THE UNKNOWN!



The pioneers blazed a trail through wild, uncharted country to the rich lands of the Far Frontier, fighting off attacks from Indians and unscrupulous enemies.



**THE TRUE-LIFE
STORY IN
PICTURES
OF THE MEN
WHO
OPENED UP THE
WEST**

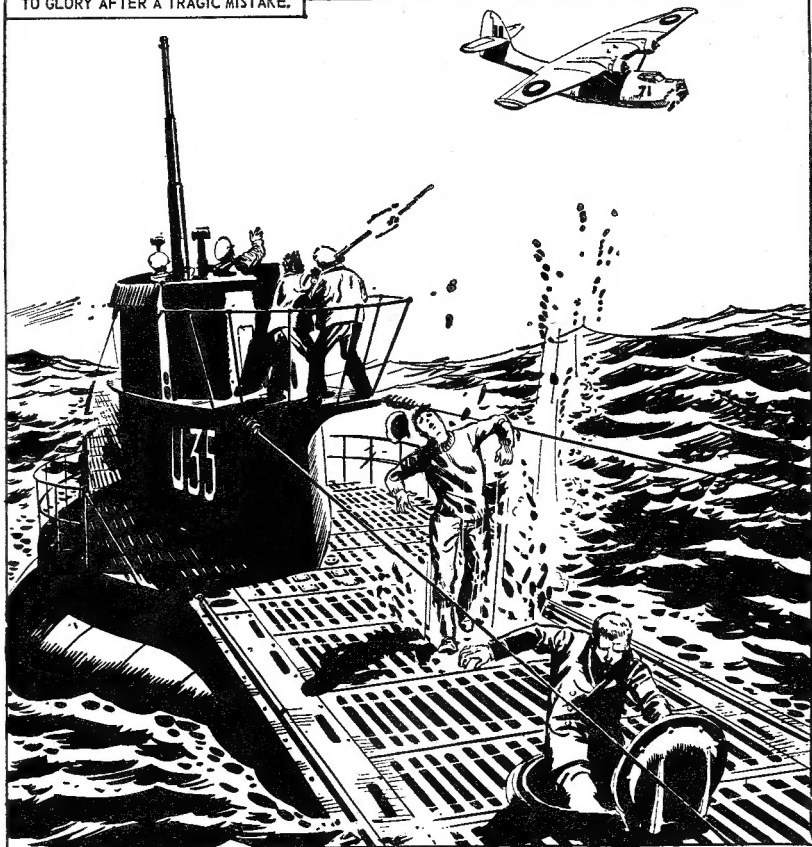
VALIANT story of THE WEST

ON SALE NOW!

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SUB HUNTER

DURING WORLD WAR 2, THE CREWS OF COASTAL COMMAND AIRCRAFT COVERED MILLIONS OF MILES OF VITAL PATROLS. THEY HUNTED THE SINISTER U-BOATS, PROTECTED CONVOYS, AND ATTACKED ENEMY SHIPPING WHEREVER THEY FOUND IT... AND NO AIRCRAFT WON MORE FAME THAN THE LONG-RANGING CATALINA FLYING-BOATS. THIS IS THE STORY OF THE CREW OF SUCH A CATALINA WHO WON THROUGH TO GLORY AFTER A TRAGIC MISTAKE.



CHAPTER 1. Panic Pilot

BOB 'SKIP' M'GUIRE AND HORACE RANKIN WENT TO SCHOOL TOGETHER. THEY WERE QUITE DIFFERENT IN CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY, AND DISLIKED EACH OTHER INTENSELY. THE FEUD WHICH HAD SIMMERED DURING THEIR SCHOOL DAYS STILL FLARED WHEN THEY BOTH WENT TO FLYING TRAINING SCHOOL. BUT THEIR INSTRUCTOR KNEW NOTHING OF THIS.

WELL, YOU'VE
BOTH DONE YOUR FIRST
SOLO FLIGHT. I'D NOW LIKE
YOU TO CLIMB TO FIVE THOUSAND FEET
AND DO A FEW CIRCUITS. WATCH OUT FOR
THOSE CLOUDS. DON'T GET LOST
... AND DON'T RUN INTO
ONE ANOTHER!





THE INSTRUCTOR HAD ALREADY DISCOVERED THAT SKIP WAS A NATURAL FLYER. RANKIN WAS SLOW AND PAINSTAKING AND WENT BY THE BOOK. AND SO IT PROVED WHEN THEY FLEW HIGH OVER THE FIELD.



REVELLING IN THE FLIGHT, SKIP PULLED UP THE NOSE AND HEADED FOR A WOOLLY CLOUD.

I'LL GET A BIT OF INSTRUMENT PRACTICE IN THAT. HORACE ISN'T LIKELY TO BE ANYWHERE NEAR ME.



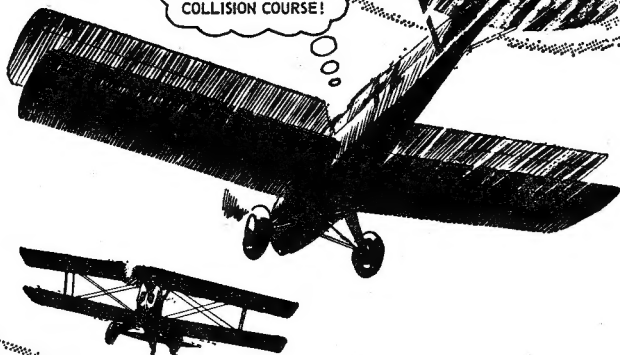
FOR A FEW MINUTES SKIP STOOGED ABOUT IN THE DAMP, CLINGING MIST OF THE CLOUD.

BRRR! IT'S COLD IN HERE, BROTHER. TIME I GOT OUT INTO THE SUNSHINE AGAIN!



ENGINE IDLING, SKIP PLANED DOWN OUT OF THE CLOUD AND WIPED MIST FROM HIS GOGGLES IN TIME TO SEE ANOTHER PLANE FLYING TOWARDS HIM.

HECK, IT'S HORACE ... AND ON A COLLISION COURSE!



OBEYING THE RULES OF THE AIR, SKIP EASED HIS CONTROLS TO PULL HIS PLANE OVER TO THE RIGHT.

PASS ON THE RIGHT - THAT'S WHAT THE BOOK SAYS. HOPE RANKIN REMEMBERS!

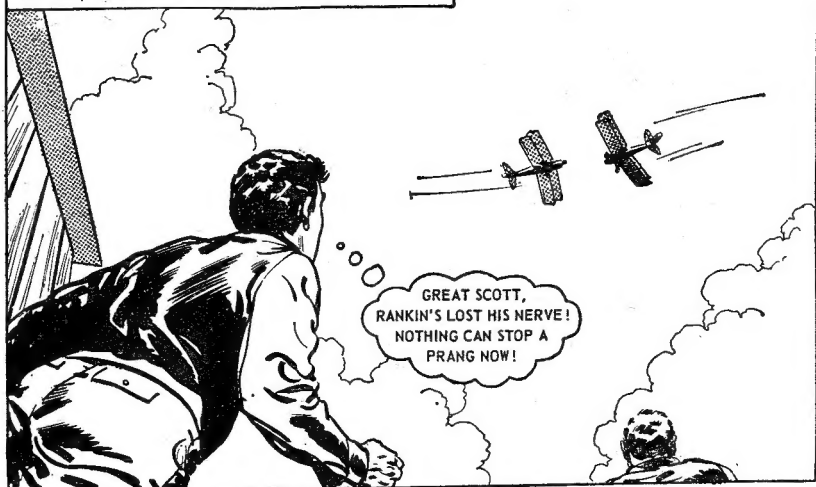


BUT TO SKIP'S HORROR, HORACE RANKIN ALSO PULLED OVER ... TO THE LEFT!

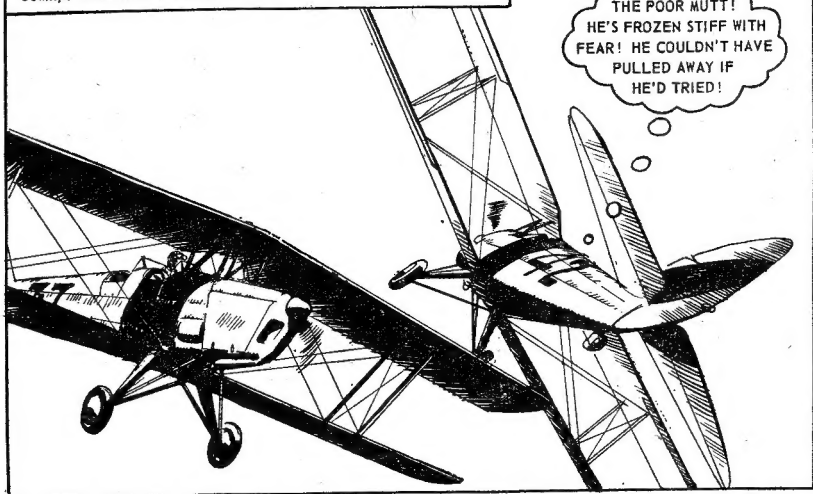
YOU IDIOT, RANKIN! TURN RIGHT! BY THUNDER, HE'S PANICKED! HE'S FORGOTTEN ALL HE WAS TOLD!



ON THE GROUND, THE INSTRUCTOR STARED TENSELY INTO THE SKY, EXPECTING A SHATTERING COLLISION.

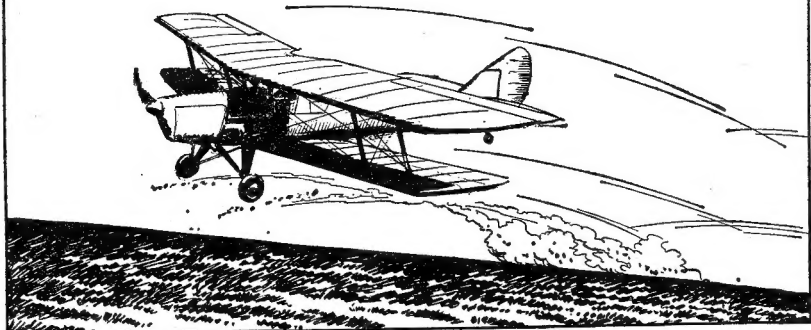


BUT SKIP M'GUIRE ACTED WITH A SPLIT-SECOND REACTION TO THE COMING DISASTER. DESPERATELY HE PULLED HIS PLANE OVER.



SKIP BANKED WIDELY AND SAW HORACE RANKIN GO BOUNCING DOWN TO A SHAKY LANDING.

HE'S MUFFED
THAT, TOO! BY
GOSH, HE'LL KILL
HIMSELF!



BY NOW RANKIN HAD LOST ALL CONTROL. HE HID HIS FACE AS
THE PLANE CRASHED DOWN AGAIN AND RACED ON CRAZILY.

I'VE
HAD IT ... IT'S
THE END!



SKIP M'GUIRE LANDED FAST AND RACED TO THE SCENE ...



SKIP DREW UP BESIDE RANKIN.

YOU CERTAINLY
PRANGED THE OLD KITE!
DO YOU FEEL ALL
RIGHT, HORACE?

LEAVE
ME ALONE,
CURSE YOU!



RANKIN'S VOICE TREMBLED
WITH SHOCK AND ANGER.

YOU INFERNAL
IDIOT. IT WAS
YOUR FAULT ... DIVING
OUT OF THAT CLOUD
RIGHT IN MY FLIGHT
PATH!

HEY,
STEADY ON,
OLD SON!



SKIP HELD HIS TEMPER IN CHECK, EXPECTING A VIOLENT ATTACK FROM RANKIN. BUT THE INSTRUCTOR'S HARD VOICE BROKE IN.

CONTROL YOURSELF, RANKIN. YOU WERE AT FAULT. YOU FORGOT THE RULE OF KEEPING TO THE RIGHT ... AND FLEW STRAIGHT INTO A COLLISION COURSE. COME TO MY OFFICE, BOTH OF YOU!



IT WAS M'GUIRE'S FAULT. HE FLEW RIGHT INTO MY PATH!

RUBBISH! YOU HAD AMPLE ROOM TO PASS! YOU OWE YOUR LIFE TO M'GUIRE'S QUICK REACTIONS, RANKIN ... AND DON'T FORGET IT!



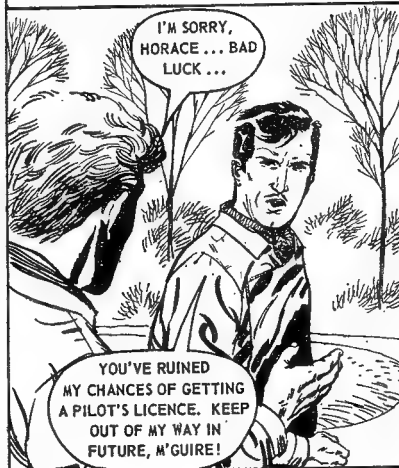
THE TRUTH IS YOU LOST YOUR NERVE, RANKIN. YOU LOST IT TWICE ... UP IN THE AIR AND WHEN YOU LANDED. FORTUNATELY THERE'S ONLY ONE SMASHED PLANE TO SHOW FOR IT INSTEAD OF TWO, AND NO LIVES LOST ... BUT I'M AFRAID YOU'LL NEVER MAKE A PILOT!



BUT, OUTSIDE, THE GOOD-NATURED SKIP LEARNED WITH A SHOCK THAT A SCHOOLDAYS FEUD HAD TURNED INTO BITTER ENMITY.

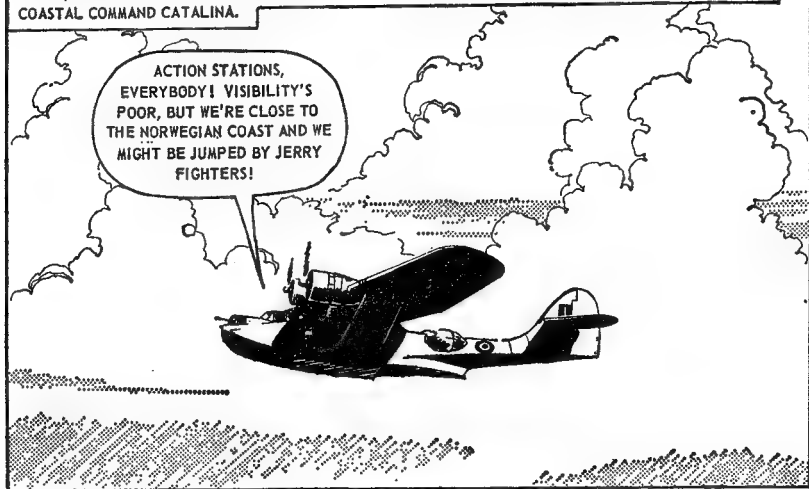
I'M SORRY, HORACE ... BAD LUCK ...

YOU'VE RUINED MY CHANCES OF GETTING A PILOT'S LICENCE. KEEP OUT OF MY WAY IN FUTURE, M'GUIRE!





SKIP MADE FLYING HIS CAREER, AND BECAME A COMMERCIAL PILOT! WAR FOUND HIM PILOTING FLYING-BOATS, AND WHEN HE JOINED THE R.A.F. HIS SKILL TOOK HIM AT LAST TO THE CAPTAIN'S SEAT OF A COASTAL COMMAND CATALINA.



FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT SKIP M'GUIRE AND HIS CREW HAD BEEN IN THE AIR FOR EIGHT HOURS. IT HAD BEEN A LONG, MONOTONOUS SEARCH FOR ENEMY SHIPS OR U-BOATS, EYES STRAINING AT THE MISTY COLD SEA BELOW.

NOT OUR LUCKY DAY, CORNY. NOT EVEN A SIGHT OF A JERRY PATROL BOAT!

NEARLY THE END OF THE PATROL, ANYWAY, AND I WON'T BE SORRY TO GET BACK TO BASE. WILL WE EVER GET ANY ACTION?

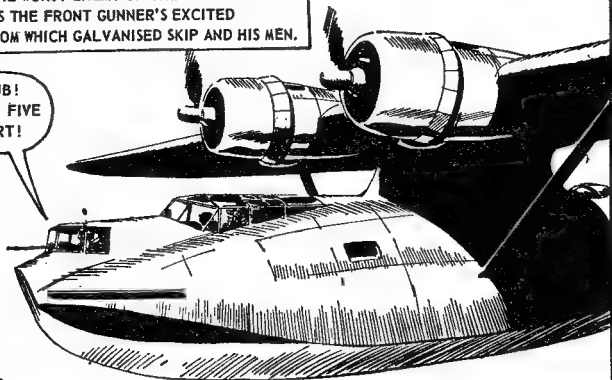
THE YOUNG CO-PILOT, FLYING-OFFICER CORNELIUS 'CORN' KELLY, YAWNED AS HE LET HIS GAZE ROAM OVER THE FOAM-FLECKED WATER.

I'D ALMOST WELCOME A VISIT FROM A COUPLE OF MESSERSCHMITTS - JUST TO HEAR THE GUNS BANGING AWAY!

I'LL SETTLE FOR A U-BOAT MYSELF! REMEMBER THOSE TORPEDOED MERCHANT NAVY MEN WE PICKED UP THE OTHER DAY?

LIKE MOST OF HIS CREW, SKIP M'GUIRE WAS STRIVING TO KEEP AWAKE. BOREDOM WAS THE WORST ENEMY OF THE LONG-RANGING CATALINA CREWS. IT WAS THE FRONT GUNNER'S EXCITED VOICE OVER THE INTERCOM WHICH GALVANISED SKIP AND HIS MEN.

SKIPPER! A SUB! JUST SURFACING! FIVE DEGREES TO PORT!



EX-FISHERMAN SAM 'SAILOR' KILICK, TRAINED AS A SEAMAN FOR MOORING THE GIANT FLYING-BOAT, WAS BEST FITTED TO SPOT THE TELL-TALE PATCH OF FOAM FAR BELOW.

BY THUNDER,
YOU'RE RIGHT, SAILOR!
A U-BOAT FOR
SURE!

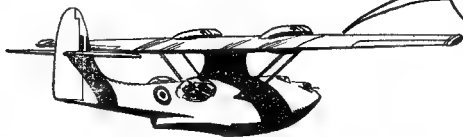


THE CONNING-TOWER'S
NEARLY CLEAR, BUT SHOULDN'T
WE IDENTIFY FIRST?

NO NEED TO.
LAST GEN WAS THAT
NO BRITISH SUBS WERE IN
THIS AREA. THAT'S A U-BOAT
ALL RIGHT!

IN THOUSANDS OF MILES OF PATROLLING, THIS WAS SKIP'S FIRST SIGHTING OF A U-BOAT. HIS CREW CAUGHT THE EXCITEMENT AS THEY CROUCHED AT ACTION STATIONS.

WE'LL DROP A DEPTH CHARGE QUICKLY, BEFORE THEY SPOT US. IF THAT DOESN'T SINK 'EM, WE'LL MAKE A RUN WITH ALL GUNS GOING!



MEN WERE ALREADY CLIMBING OUT OF THE CONNING-TOWER WHEN THE DEPTH CHARGE HURTLIED DOWN AND EXPLODED.

THE CRAZY IDIOTS! THEY MUST BE BLIND! WE'VE BEEN DEPTH-CHARGED BY THE R.A.F.!



WHITE-FACED, CORNY KELLY, NOW GETTING A CLOSE-UP OF THE SUBMARINE'S CONNING-TOWER, KNEW THEY HAD MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE.

SKIP! THAT'S NOT A U-BOAT. IT'S BRITISH! WE'VE PLASTERED ONE OF OUR OWN SUBS!

WHAT? BUT IT CAN'T BE!

MEANWHILE, IN THE SUBMARINE'S CONTROL ROOM -

THAT DEPTH CHARGE SHOOK THE WHOLE VESSEL, SIR. IT'S SPLIT THE PRESSURE HULL AND THE ENGINE ROOM'S FLOODING!

GET THE MEN OUT! WE'LL HAVE TO ABANDON SHIP!

SEIZING AN ALDIS LAMP, THE SUBMARINE COMMANDER SCRAMBLED UP TO THE CONNING-TOWER AND SAILOR KILLICK'S KEEN EYES PICKED UP HIS TERSE, BITTER MESSAGE.

IT'S BRITISH RIGHT ENOUGH, SKIPPER. THEY'RE FLASHING A SIGNAL ... 'YOU HAVE CRIPPLED A BRITISH SUBMARINE. GET READY TO RENDER HELP. AND PLEASE DON'T START SHOOTING!'

CHAPTER 2. Wrong Target

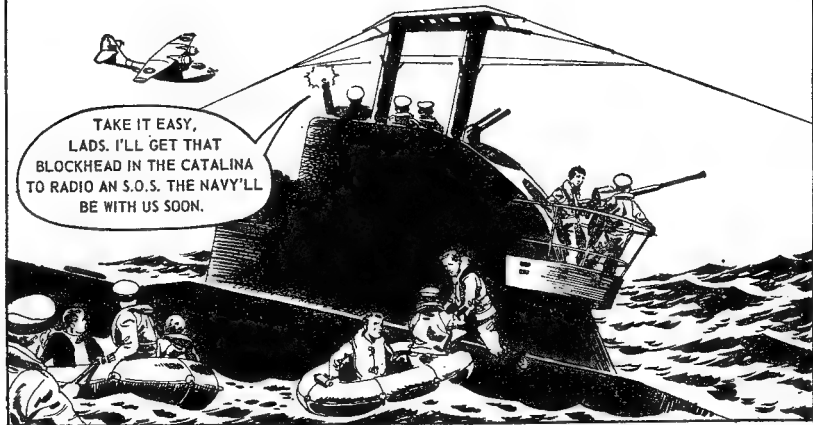
RIGID WITH SHOCK AND DISMAY, SKIP M'GUIRE SAT AT THE CONTROLS AND GUIDED THE BIG FLYING-BOAT IN A BANKING TURN OVER THE STRICKEN SUBMARINE.

I'VE HAD IT, BOYS! I RECKON YOU'LL BE FLYING WITH A NEW SKIPPER. BUT I STILL CAN'T UNDERSTAND HOW THAT SUB CAME TO BE IN THE AREA!

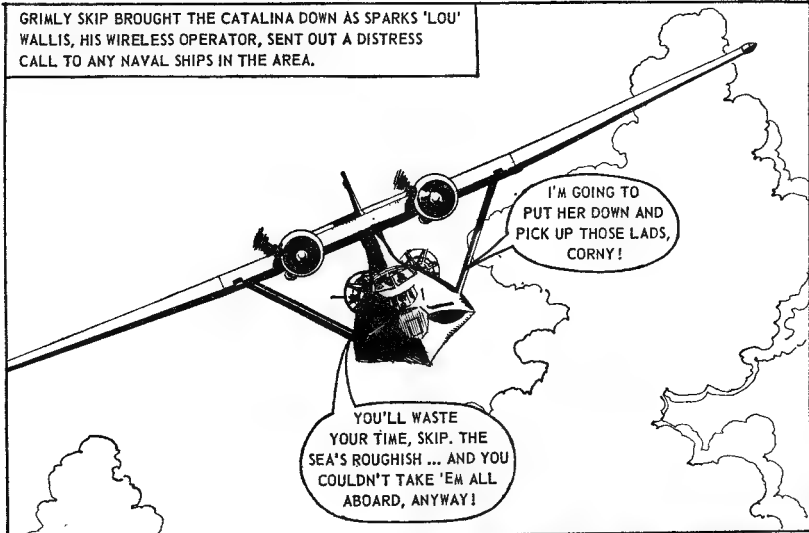
TOUGH LUCK, SKIP. BUT WE ALL THOUGHT IT WAS A U-BOAT.

UNABLE TO PROCEED, THE SUBMARINE WAS STILL AFLOAT. BUT CHOKING FUMES FROM THE BATTERIES FILLED HER HULL, AND THERE WAS NO OTHER COURSE FOR HER CREW BUT TO ABANDON HER.

TAKE IT EASY, LADS. I'LL GET THAT BLOCKHEAD IN THE CATALINA TO RADIO AN S.O.S. THE NAVY'LL BE WITH US SOON.



GRIMLY SKIP BROUGHT THE CATALINA DOWN AS SPARKS 'LOU' WALLIS, HIS WIRELESS OPERATOR, SENT OUT A DISTRESS CALL TO ANY NAVAL SHIPS IN THE AREA.



INTENT AT HIS SET, SPARKS WALLIS SPOKE EDGILY WHILE THE NAVIGATOR WORKED OUT THEIR EXACT POSITION.



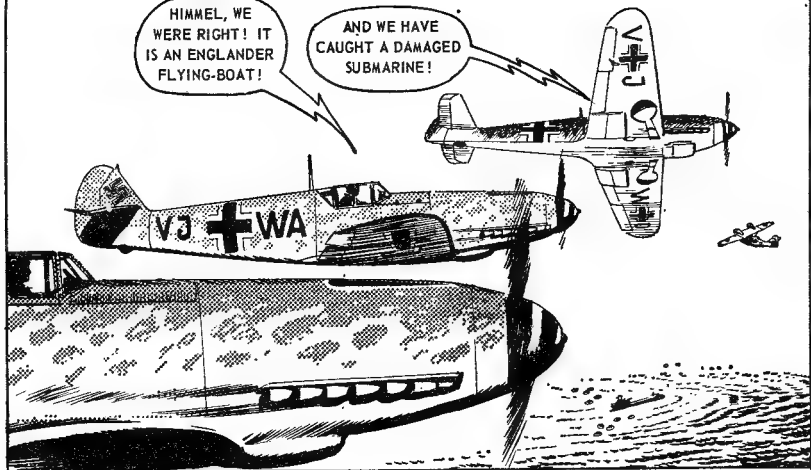
BUT MOMENTS LATER JOCK PERTH, THE FIRST ENGINEER, SIGHTED THREE SPECKS IN THE SKY FROM HIS ACTION STATION IN THE WAIST BLISTER OF THE CATALINA.

OCH, NOW WE'RE IN REAL TROUBLE! THREE PLANES, SKIPPER ... FIGHTERS, YE KEN! COMING FROM LANDWARDS! THEY MUST BE JERRIES!

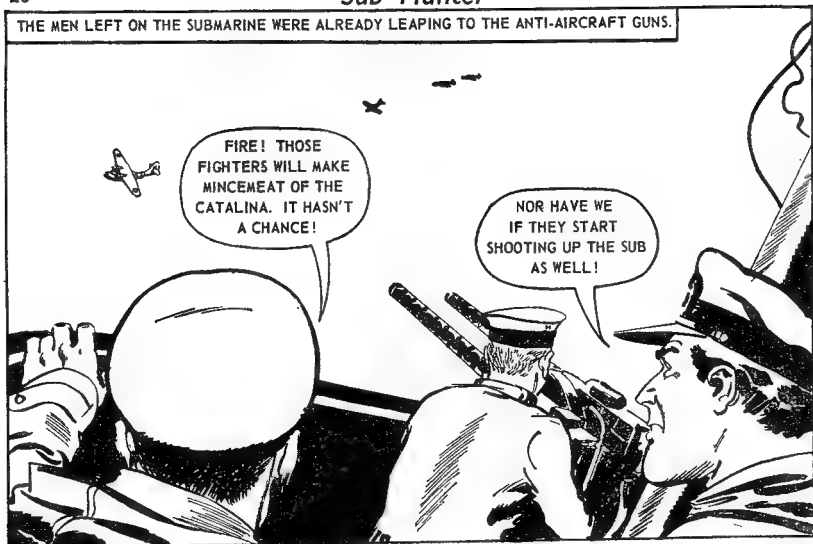
THE AIR CRACKLED WITH JUBILANT CHATTER IN GERMAN AS THE THREE LAND-BASED FIGHTERS POUNCED.

HIMMEL, WE WERE RIGHT! IT IS AN ENGLANDER FLYING-BOAT!

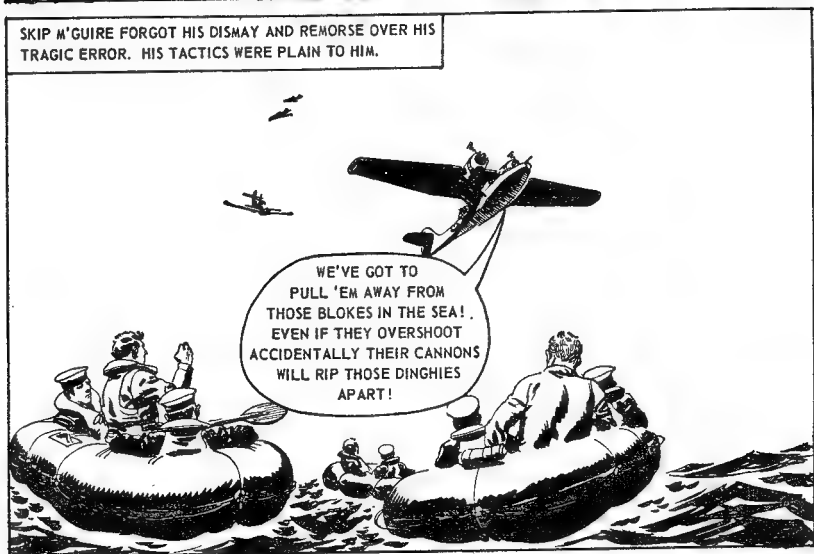
AND WE HAVE CAUGHT A DAMAGED SUBMARINE!



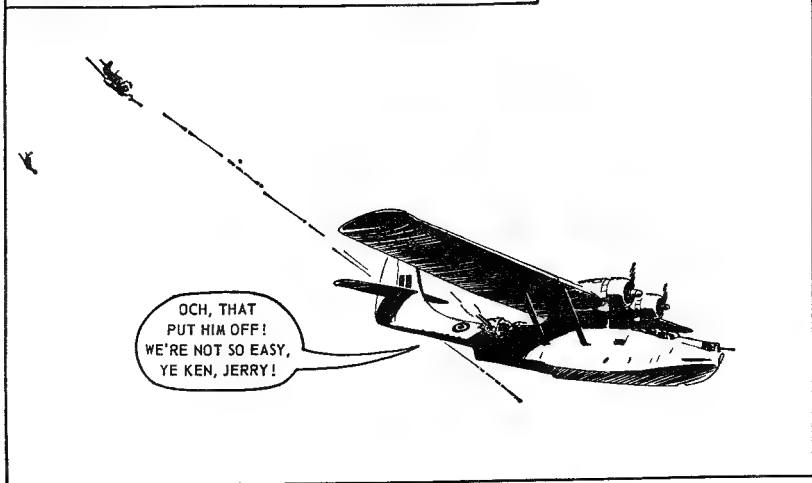
THE MEN LEFT ON THE SUBMARINE WERE ALREADY LEAPING TO THE ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS.



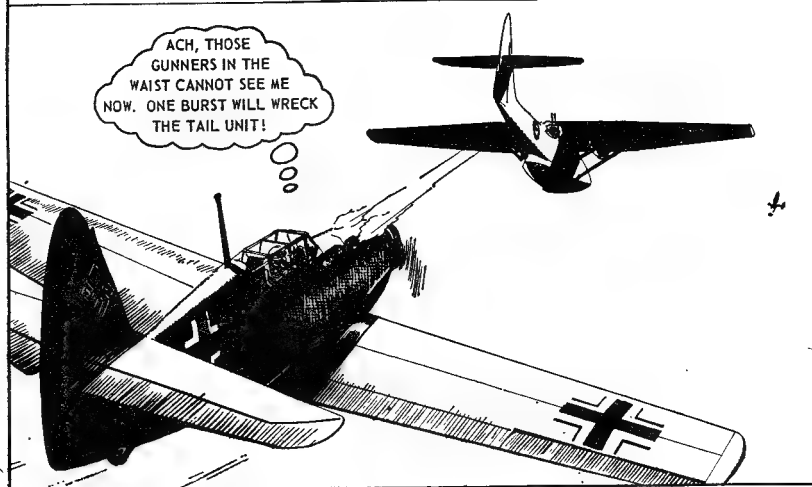
SKIP M'GUIRE FORGOT HIS DISMAY AND REMORSE OVER HIS TRAGIC ERROR. HIS TACTICS WERE PLAIN TO HIM.



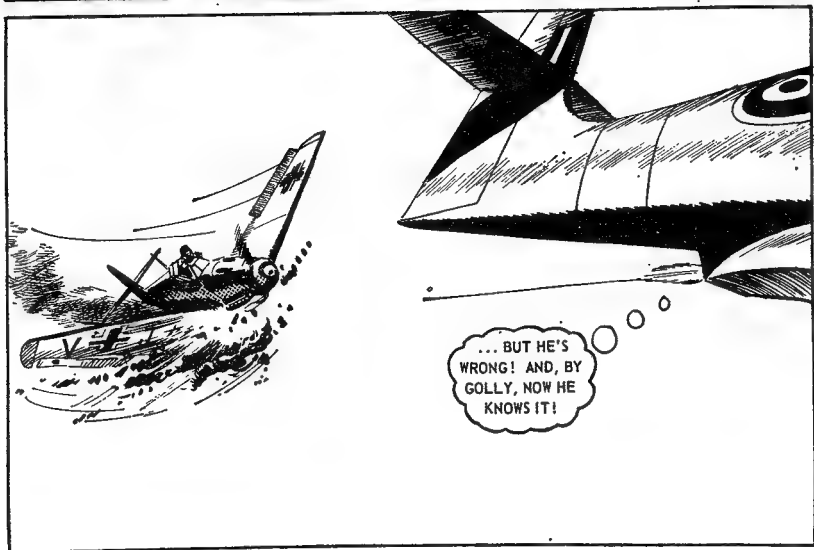
THE CATALINA COULD NOT MATCH THE MESSERSCHMITTS IN SPEED OR MANOEUVRE ... BUT ITS BRISTLING GUNS GAVE SKIP SOME HOPE.



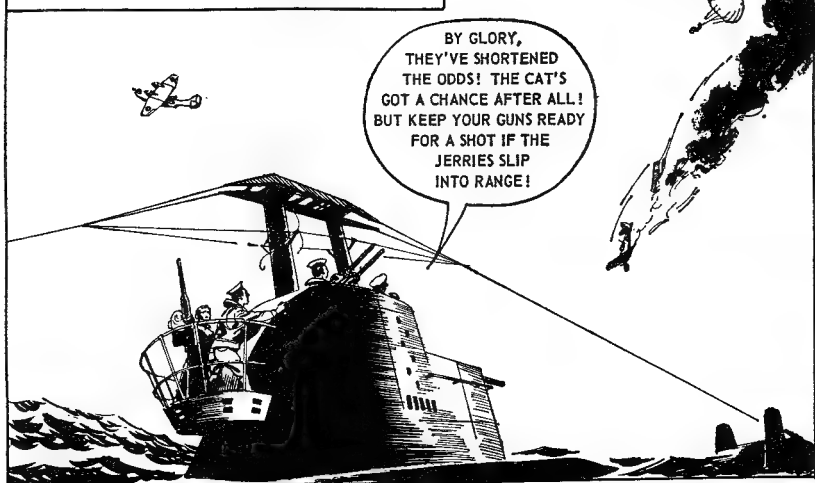
A SECOND FIGHTER TRIED TO ATTACK FROM ASTERN, USING THE HIGH TAIL OF THE CATALINA TO SCREEN HIM FROM THE BLISTER GUNS.



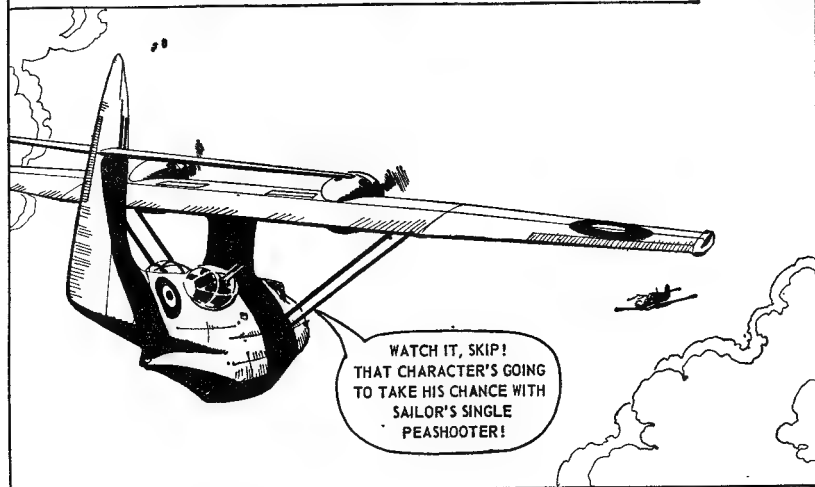
BUT THE CAT'S NAVIGATOR HAD MOVED TO HIS ACTION STATION AT THE SINGLE MACHINE-GUN FIRING THROUGH A BLAST TUNNEL AT THE REAR OF THE HULL, DESIGNED TO PROTECT THE FLYING-BOAT'S BLIND SPOT.



WATCHING THE AIR FIGHT, THE SUBMARINE CREW FORGOT THEIR ANGER AT THE CREW OF THE CATALINA.



THE THIRD GERMAN DECIDED TO PIT HIS CANNONS AND MACHINE-GUNS AGAINST THE NOSE OF THE CATALINA ... IN A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO SMASH THE PILOT'S COCKPIT.

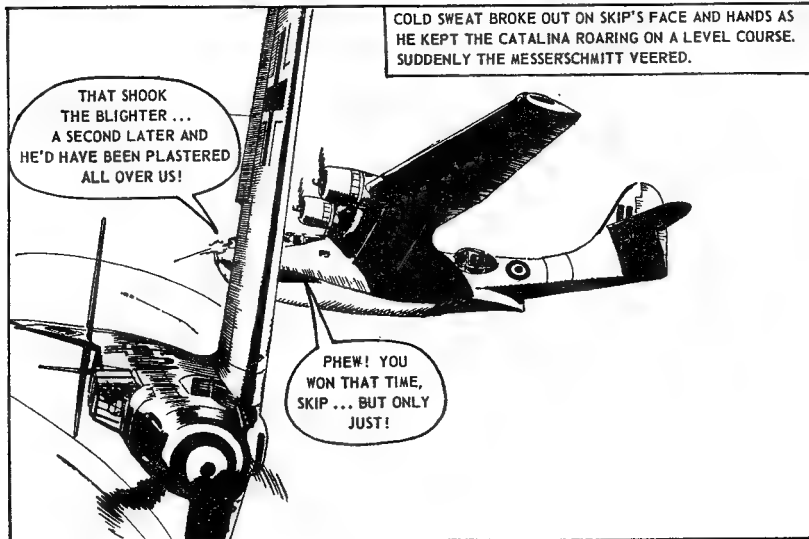


Sub Hunter

THE FIRST BURST FROM THE HURTLING FIGHTER SIZZLED OVER TOO HIGH, BUT CORNY KELLY FROZE IN HIS SEAT IN ALARM.



COLD SWEAT BROKE OUT ON SKIP'S FACE AND HANDS AS HE KEPT THE CATALINA ROARING ON A LEVEL COURSE. SUDDENLY THE MESSERSCHMITT VEERED.



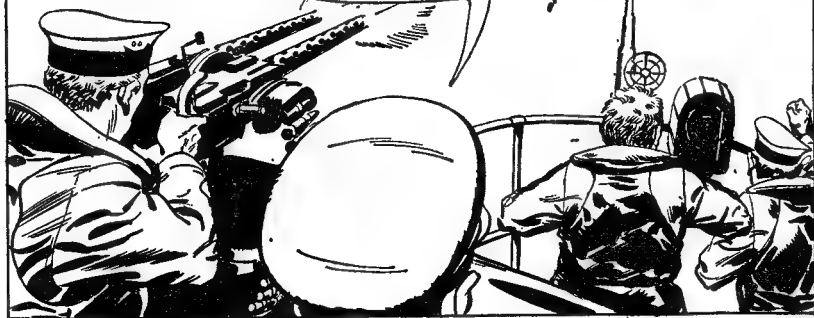
UNBIDDEN INTO SKIP'S MIND LEAPT A MEMORY OF ANOTHER NEAR COLLISION ... YEARS AGO, IT SEEMED NOW.

THAT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME IT'S HAPPENED TO ME, CORNY. BUT THE LAST TIME IT WAS I WHO DID THE DODGING!

SKIP, THAT BLOKE'S NERVE GOT SO SHOOK UP HE'S HEADING STRAIGHT INTO TROUBLE!

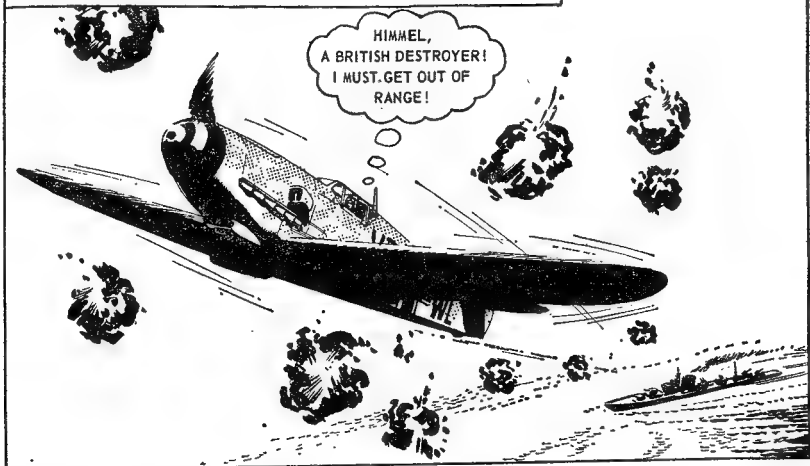
INTENT ON THE ATTACK ON THE FLYING-BOAT, THE GERMAN PILOT HAD FORGOTTEN, OR NOT EVEN NOTICED, THAT MEN STILL MANNED THE SUBMARINE'S GUNS. THE CRAFT WAS NEARLY SINKING ... BUT THEY WERE STILL READY FOR BATTLE!

THE FIRST TIME WE'VE HIT A FIGHTER ... AND IT WOULD HAVE TO BE WHEN WE'RE SINKING OURSELVES! GET TO THE BOATS, MEN! ... THERE'S ONLY ONE JERRY LEFT!

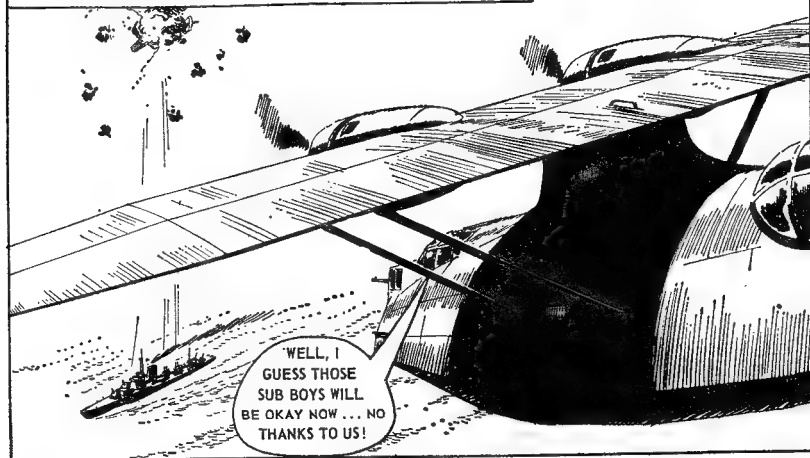


Sub Hunter

ZOOMING HIGH FOR A DIVING ATTACK ON THE FLYING-BOAT, THE SURVIVING GERMAN HAD SEEN A SLIM SHAPE SLASHING THROUGH THE SEA FAR BELOW ... EMERGING LIKE A WRAITH FROM THE MISTY DISTANCE.

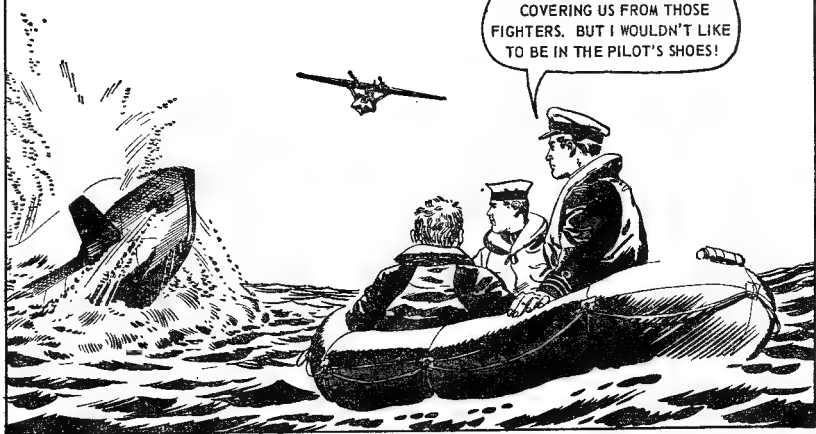


BUT THE GERMAN HAD SIGHTED THE DESTROYER TOO LATE. THE CREW OF THE CATALINA SAW THE MESSERSCHMITT'S DOOM AT THE SAME MOMENT THAT THEY SAW THE DEADLY GREYHOUND OF THE SEA.



THERE WAS NO HOPE OF SAVING THE SUBMARINE. THE SKIPPER AND HIS MEN HAD GOT OFF JUST IN TIME BEFORE AN INTERNAL EXPLOSION RIPPED HER APART.

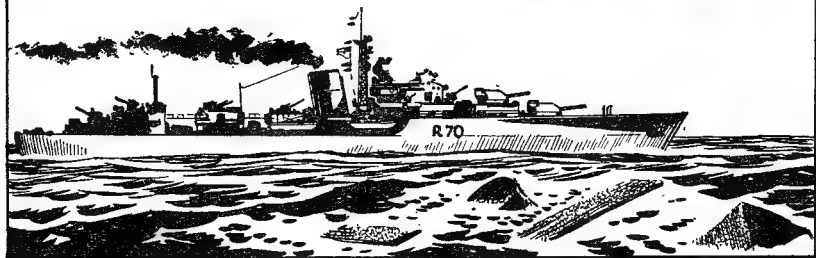
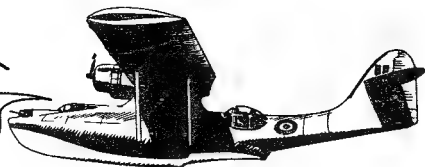
WELL, THOSE R.A.F. BOYS DID A GOOD JOB COVERING US FROM THOSE FIGHTERS. BUT I WOULDN'T LIKE TO BE IN THE PILOT'S SHOES!



SKIP FLEW IN CIRCLES OVER THE DESTROYER, WATCHING THE SUBMARINERS BEING TAKEN ABOARD AND READY TO WARD OFF ANY FURTHER AIR STRIKE. SOON THE DESTROYER'S ALDIS LAMP STARTED FLASHING.

WHAT'S HE SAYING, CORNY? CONGRATULATING US ON SINKING ONE OF OUR OWN SUBS?

NOT QUITE, SKIP. THIS'LL SHAKE YOU!



SWIFTLY CORNY KELLY SCRIBBLED DOWN THE MORSE SIGNAL AND PASSED IT TO SKIP M'GUIRE.

ADMIRALTY SENT SIGNAL TO
ALL COMMANDS THAT BRITISH
SUBMARINE FORCE IS OPERATING
ON SPECIAL MISSION IN
NORWEGIAN WATERS.
NO SUB-REPEAT NO SUB-
TO BE ATTACKED.
WHY DID YOU IGNORE?

THIS IS CRAZY!
WE GOT NO SUCH
SIGNAL.

SOMETHING WENT
WRONG SOMEWHERE, SKIP ... AND WE
CARRY THE CAN!

SIGNALLING THAT HE MUST RETURN TO BASE AND WOULD INVESTIGATE,
SKIP HANDED THE CONTROLS OVER TO CORNY KELLY AND WENT AFT
FOR A PRIVATE WORD WITH HIS WIRELESS OPERATOR ...

YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY
SURE NOTHING CAME THROUGH,
SPARKS?

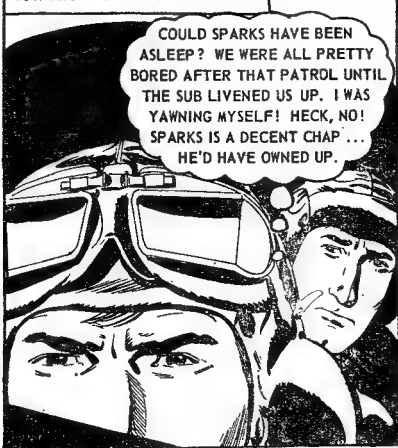
DEAD SURE, SKIPPER!
MIND YOU, THERE WAS A
SPELL WHEN THE SET SEEMED
DEAD. I FOUND A 'SHORT' WHICH
MAY HAVE CAUSED THE
TROUBLE.



SO IT WAS JUST OUR BAD LUCK! THE SIGNAL MUST HAVE COME THROUGH WHILE THE SET WAS OUT OF ORDER - AND WE PERFORMED THE MAGNIFICENT FEAT OF SINKING ONE OF OUR OWN SUBS!

I'M SORRY, SKIPPER ... DEAD SORRY!

GLOOMILY SKIP WENT BACK TO THE CONTROLS, BUT AS HE FLEW BACK TO THE INEVITABLE INQUIRY AND UNPLEASANTNESS THAT WOULD AWAIT THEM, A TINY SUSPICION FORMED IN HIS MIND.



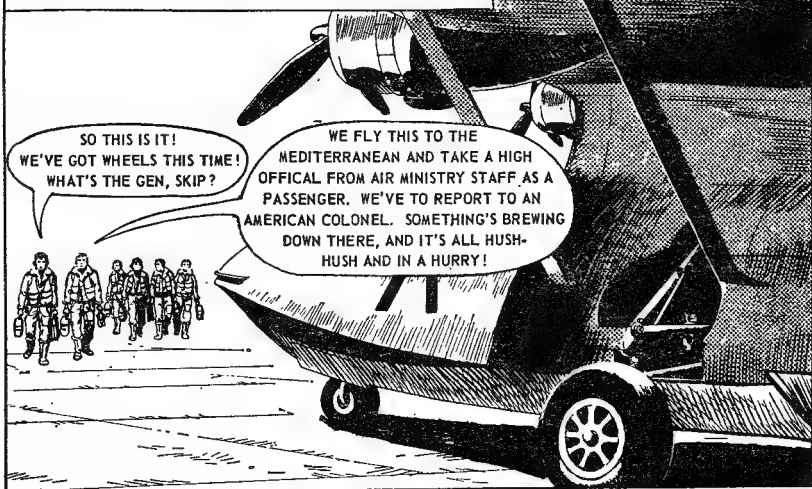
COULD SPARKS HAVE BEEN ASLEEP? WE WERE ALL PRETTY BORED AFTER THAT PATROL UNTIL THE SUB LIVENED US UP. I WAS YAWNING MYSELF! HECK, NO! SPARKS IS A DECENT CHAP ... HE'D HAVE OWNED UP.

BACK AT BASE, SKIP AND HIS MEN FOUND THEMSELVES UNPOPULAR. FOLLOWED WEEKS OF IDLENESS AND INQUIRIES, UNTIL AT LAST SKIP FOUND HIS CREW KICKING THEIR HEELS AT THE MOORING BASIN.



WELL, THAT'S IT, BOYS. WE'RE ALL OFF OPS STILL - MAYBE WE'LL BE TRANSPORTED TO TRANSPORT WORK. ABOUT THE ONLY GOOD THING IN OUR FAVOUR IS THAT WE HELD OFF THOSE JERRY FIGHTERS.

ALL WERE ITCHING FOR ACTION WHEN THEY WERE POSTED TO SOUTHAMPTON TO PICK UP ANOTHER CATALINA - AN AMPHIBIAN.



SKIP SAW A GLINT OF AMUSEMENT IN WING-COMMANDER RANKIN'S DARK EYES. HE SAW ALSO THAT RANKIN HAD NOT FORGOTTEN THEIR LAST ENCOUNTER.

I HEAR YOU HAD SOME TROUBLE WITH A SUBMARINE, M'GUIRE. BAD LUCK! FORTUNATELY WE'RE NOT SUB HUNTING ON THIS TRIP!

MY CREW AND I PREFER TO FORGET THAT EPISODE ... SIR!

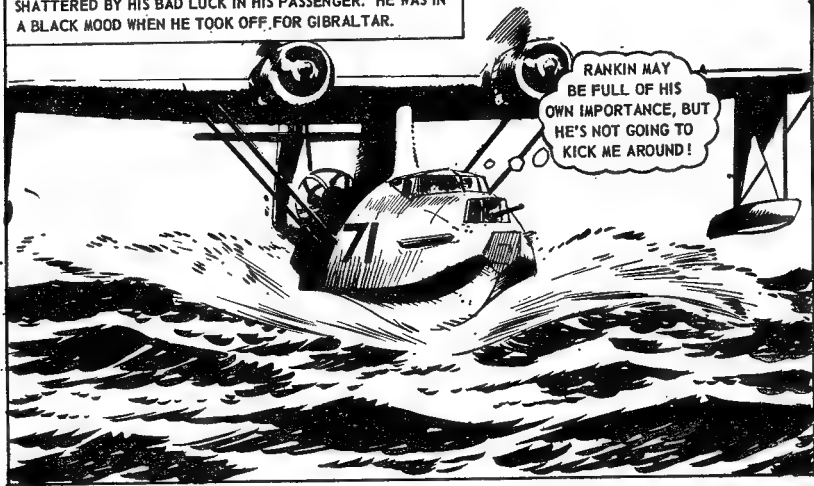
RANKIN TURNED AWAY WITH A STUDIED SUPERIOR GESTURE.

WELL, LET'S GO, SHALL WE? NO TIME TO WASTE. I'VE GOT TO BE IN GIBRALTAR JUST AS QUICKLY, AS YOU CAN GET ME THERE!

BIG-HEADED CLOT! HE'S ENJOYING THIS ... PULLING RANK ON ME AND KNOWING I'VE ALREADY GOT A BIG BLACK MARK AGAINST ME!

ANY HOPES SKIP MIGHT HAVE HAD OF A PLEASANT TRIP TO THE WARMER CLIMATE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN WERE SHATTERED BY HIS BAD LUCK IN HIS PASSENGER. HE WAS IN A BLACK MOOD WHEN HE TOOK OFF FOR GIBRALTAR.

RANKIN MAY BE FULL OF HIS OWN IMPORTANCE, BUT HE'S NOT GOING TO KICK ME AROUND!



CHAPTER 3. Bay of Biscay Battle

AS THE CATALINA CLIMBED OVER THE CHANNEL AND HEADED FAR OUT INTO THE BAY OF BISCAY, WING-COMMANDER RANKIN SPOKE COLDLY.

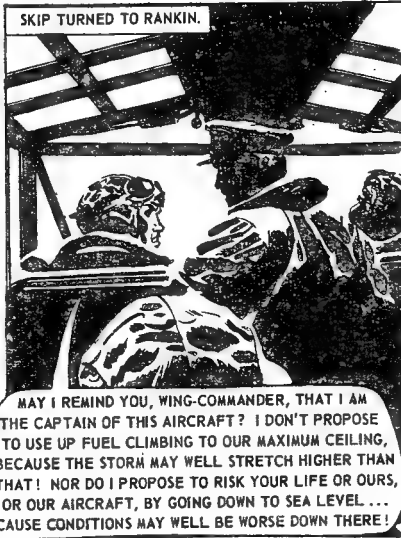
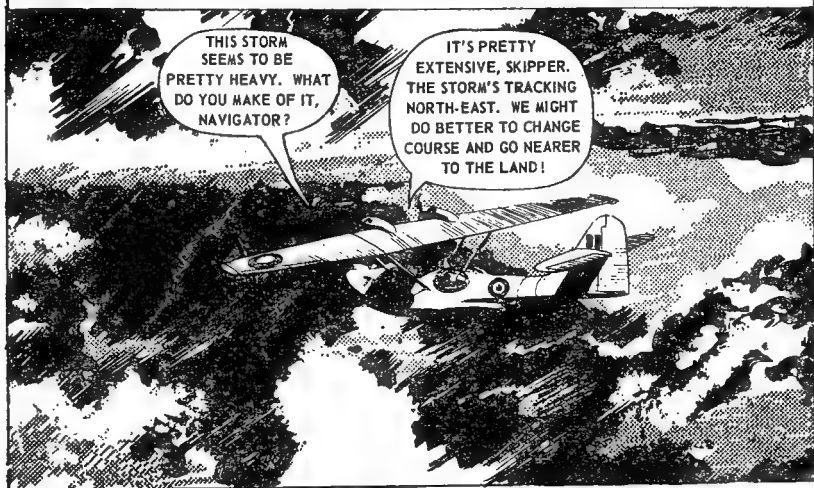
THERE MUST BE NO ACCIDENTS OR DIVERSIONS, M'GUIRE. THE PAPERS I CARRY ARE OF SUPREME IMPORTANCE. THE ALLIED AIR FORCES ARE TO HAVE AN AMERICAN COMMANDER FOR THE NORTH AFRICAN LANDINGS AND THE INVASION OF SICILY, AND I AM TO CARRY OUT LIAISON WITH HIM.

YOU'RE IN THE BIG STUFF, EH?

REMEMBER I HAVE A SUPERIOR RANK, M'GUIRE. THERE IS NO NEED FOR INSOLENCE. I TOLD YOU THIS SO THAT YOU WILL AVOID YOUR FAVOURITE PURSUIT OF SINKING SUBMARINES!

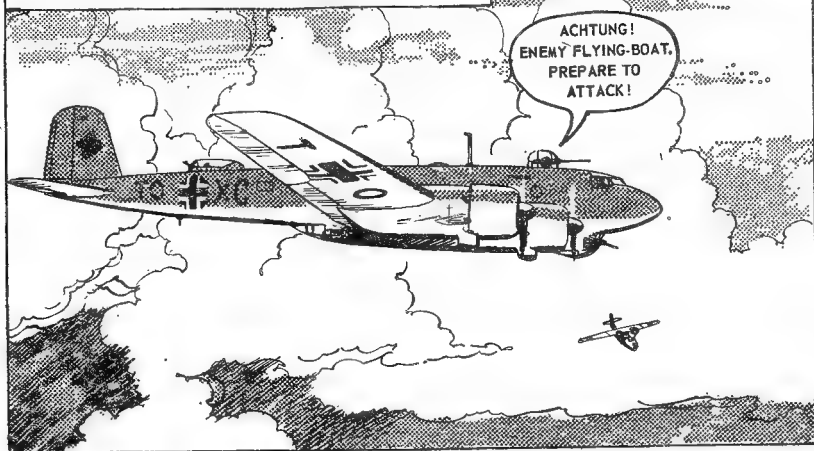
THAT'S NOT ON THE AGENDA, ANYWAY, ... SIR! YOU'LL HAVE NOTICED WE CARRY NO BOMBS OR DEPTH CHARGES ... ONLY DEFENSIVE ARMAMENT.

THEY FLEW ON STEADILY FOR HOUR AFTER HOUR, FAR FROM ENEMY-HELD COASTS... BUT THE GATHERING BLACK CLOUDS AND LIGHTNING OF A STORM FRONT MADE SKIP THINK ABOUT CHANGING COURSE.





AN HOUR LATER THE CATALINA FLEW OUT INTO SUNSHINE, WITH THE STORM ROLLING AWAY TO THE NORTH-WEST. BUT SKIP'S JINX WAS STILL DOGGING HIM... FOR HIS AIRCRAFT WAS SPOTTED BY A GERMAN FOCKE-WULF CONDOR BOMBER!



NOT YET HAVING SEEN THE CONDOR, SKIP AGAIN ADDRESSED RANKIN,

YOU SEE,
WING-COMMANDER,
IT'S MUCH NICER
OUTSIDE NOW!

YOU'RE TOO
CLOSE TO THE ENEMY ...
MUCH TOO CLOSE! IF
ANYTHING HAPPENS ...

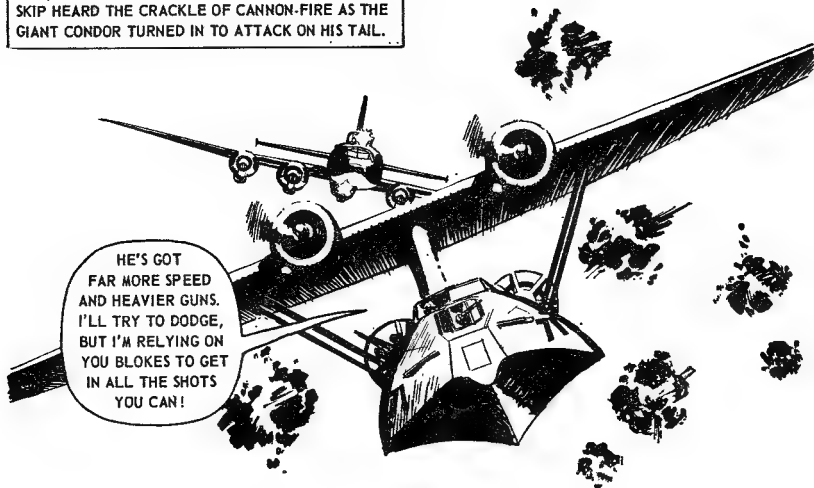
THEN A YELL FROM JOCK PERTH IN THE WAIST BLISTER ALERTED ALL THE CREW.

SKIPPER ...
THERE'S A DIRTY
GREAT CONDOR
BEARING DOWN
ON US!

THOSE KITES
BRISTLE WITH HEAVY
MACHINE-GUNS AND CANNON!
IT COULD BLOW US
TO PIECES!



SKIP HEARD THE CRACKLE OF CANNON-FIRE AS THE GIANT CONDOR TURNED IN TO ATTACK ON HIS TAIL.



WHITE-FACED AND STRAINED, WING-COMMANDER RANKIN LUNGED TOWARDS SKIP.

I TOLD YOU SO! YOU'VE GOT ME INTO A DANGEROUS POSITION! CLIMB, CAN'T YOU? GET AWAY! YOU MUST!

SHUT UP, RANKIN! WE CAN'T CLIMB FAST ENOUGH TO GET AWAY FROM THAT CONDOR! WE'VE JUST GOT TO BLUFF AND SHOOT IT OUT!



GOSH, RANKIN REALLY DID LOSE HIS NERVE THAT LAST TIME. HE'S JITTERY IN THE AIR AND SCARED-OF-ACTION!



SKIP FORGOT RANKIN FROM THEN ON IN THE HEAT OF THE ACTION. HIS SKILFUL HANDLING OF THE CATALINA CAUSED THE NEXT BURST FROM THE CONDOR TO MISS, AND GAVE HIS WAIST GUNNERS A CHANCE.



WINCING UNDER THE CLATTER OF THE CATALINA'S GUNS AND THE CRACKLE OF THE CONDOR'S FIRE, RANKIN COWERED LOWER IN HIS SEAT.



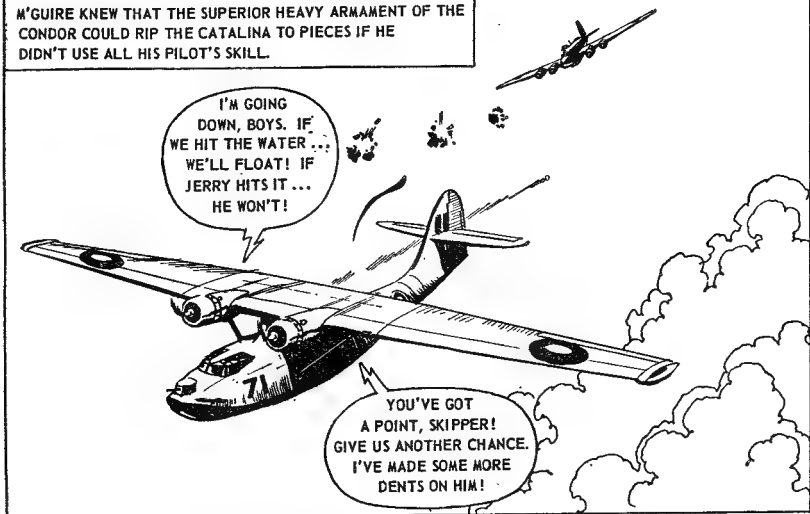
NEXT MOMENT, A CANNON-SHELL RIPPED THROUGH THE HULL AND EXPLODED WITH AN EAR-SPLITTING BANG.



PROMPT ACTION BY THE WIRELESS OPERATOR PREVENTED A DISASTROUS FIRE.

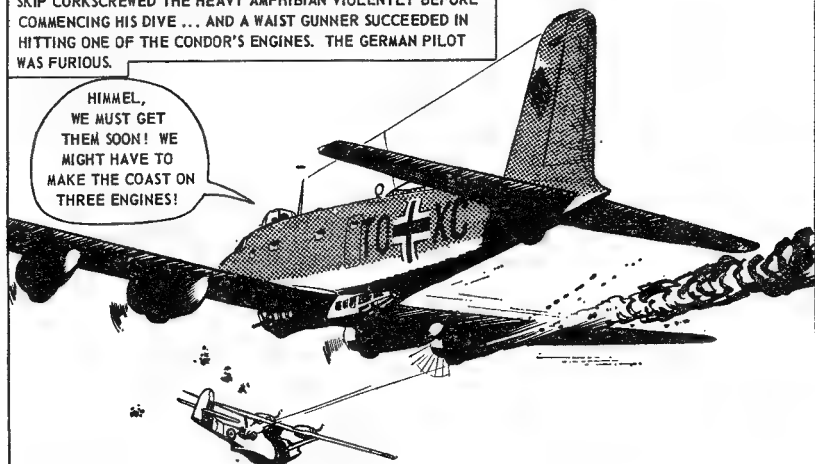


THAT INCIDENT HAD BEEN QUICKLY DISPOSED OF, BUT SKIP M'GUIRE KNEW THAT THE SUPERIOR HEAVY ARMAMENT OF THE CONDOR COULD RIP THE CATALINA TO PIECES IF HE DIDN'T USE ALL HIS PILOT'S SKILL.



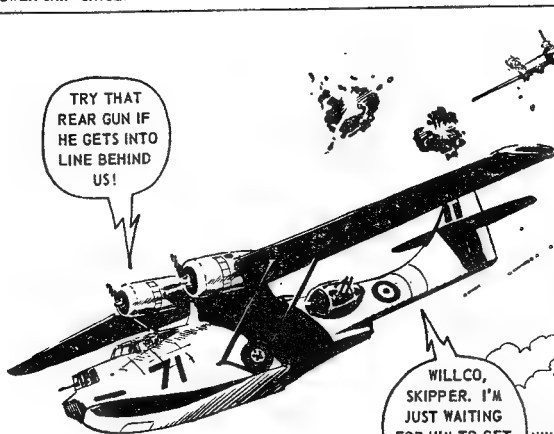
SKIP CORKSCREWED THE HEAVY AMPHIBIAN VIOLENTLY BEFORE COMMENCING HIS DIVE ... AND A WAIST GUNNER SUCCEEDED IN HITTING ONE OF THE CONDOR'S ENGINES. THE GERMAN PILOT WAS FURIOUS.

HIMMEL,
WE MUST GET
THEM SOON! WE
MIGHT HAVE TO
MAKE THE COAST ON
THREE ENGINES!



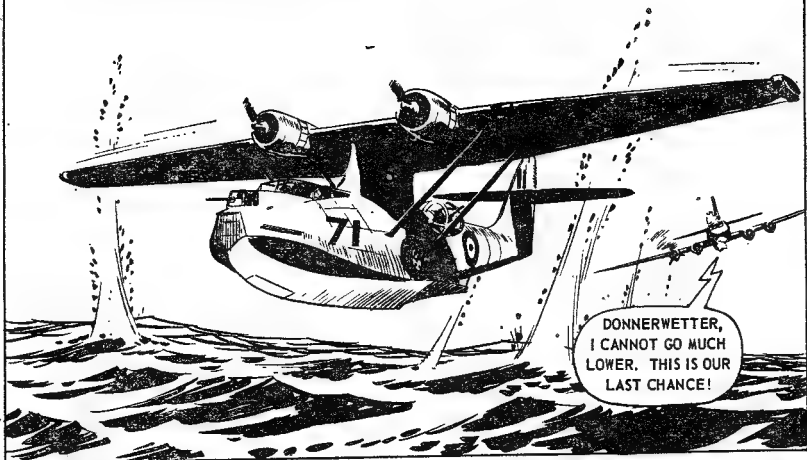
LOWER AND LOWER SKIP CIRCLED TOWARDS THE HEAVING SEA ... AND THE CONDOR HUNG ON GRIMLY.

TRY THAT
REAR GUN IF
HE GETS INTO
LINE BEHIND
US!



WILLCO,
SKIPPER. I'M
JUST WAITING
FOR HIM TO GET
IN MY SIGHTS!

AT LAST THE CATALINA WAS ALMOST SKIMMING THE SEA, AND THE GERMAN PILOT BEGAN TO HAVE DOUBTS.



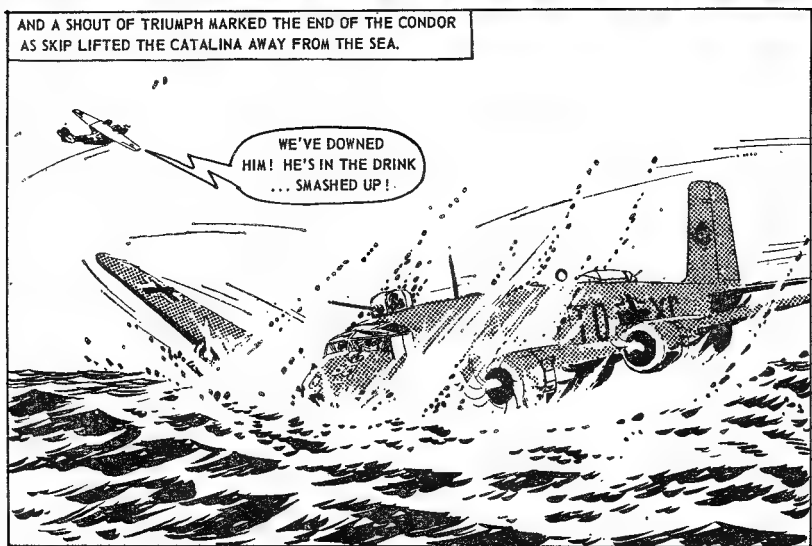
IN A LAST DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO GET THE CATALINA IN THE SIGHTS OF HIS FORWARD CANNON, THE CONDOR PILOT HEADED FOR THE AMPHIBIAN'S HIGH TAIL. THIS GAVE THE BRITISH REAR-GUNNER THE CHANCE HE HAD BEEN WAITING FOR!



VISION VANISHED FOR THE CONDOR PILOT AS THE BURST HIT HIS WINDSCREEN.

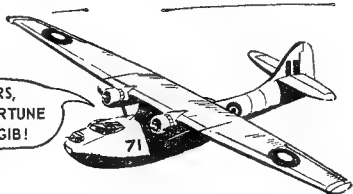


AND A SHOUT OF TRIUMPH MARKED THE END OF THE CONDOR AS SKIP LIFTED THE CATALINA AWAY FROM THE SEA.



SKIP CIRCLED, BUT ONLY A RING OF FOAM AND OIL AND FLOATING DEBRIS MARKED THE GRAVE OF THE CONDOR.

POOR BLIGHTERS,
BUT THAT'S THE FORTUNE
OF WAR! ON TO GIB!



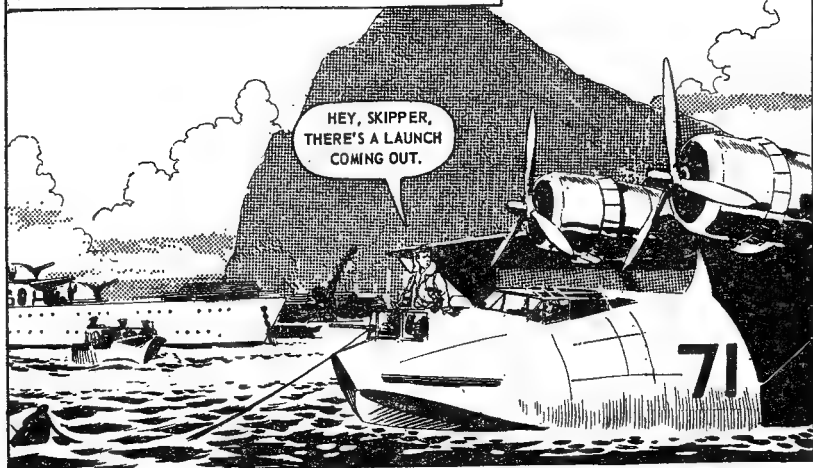
RELAXING, SKIP M'GUIRE HANDED OVER TO CORNY KELLY, HIS CO-PILOT, AND WENT AFT TO HAVE A LOOK AT THE DAMAGE.

WELL,
WING-COMMANDER,
WE GOT YOU OUT OF THAT
SAFELY! HOW DOES IT
FEEL TO A'CHAIRBORNE
WALLAH TO BE IN
ACTION?

REMEMBER MY RANK,
M'GUIRE. YOU'LL HEAR MORE
OF THIS WHEN WE ARRIVE!



BUT EVENTS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WERE MOVING FAST, AND WHEN THE CATALINA MOORED IN GIBRALTAR HARBOUR, SKIP AND HIS CREW FOUND THERE WAS TO BE NO SHORE LEAVE.



SKIP FOUND A BRUSQUE, STOCKY AMERICAN STANDING IN THE LAUNCH.

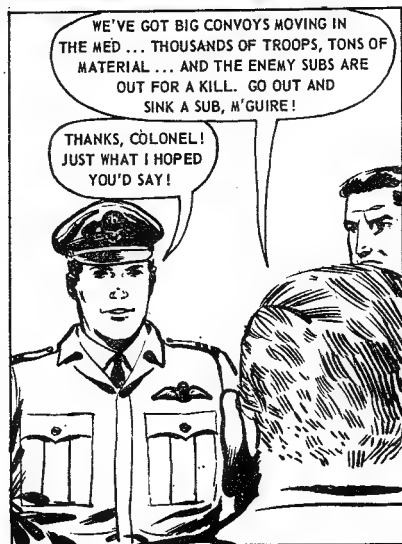
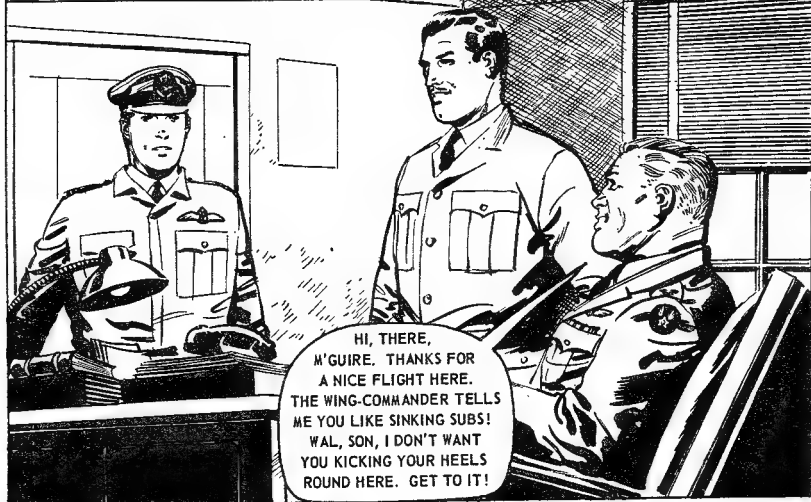




WITHIN A FEW HOURS SKIP TOUCHED DOWN ON AN AIRFIELD NEAR ALGIERS, AND THIS SEEMED TO PRESENT HIM WITH A GOOD OPPORTUNITY.



COLONEL CULVER MOVED FAST. THAT NIGHT, SKIP WAS ORDERED TO HIS OFFICE.



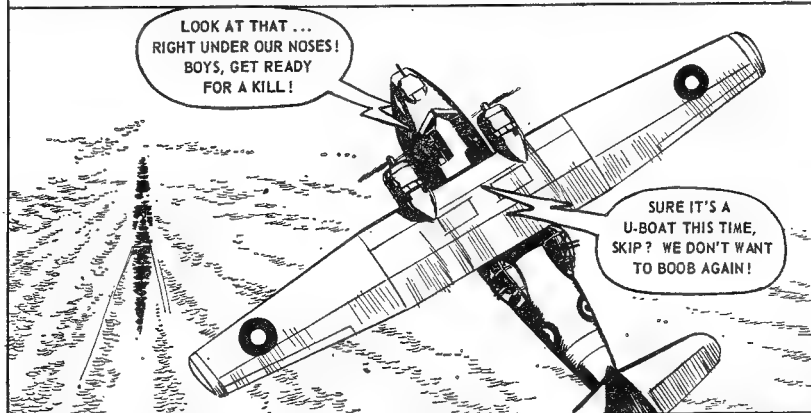
SKIP STRODE OFF, CHUCKLING TO HIMSELF.

RANKIN PROBABLY THOUGHT I WOULDN'T WANT TO GO OUT ON OPS. OR MAYBE HE HOPES I'LL KILL MYSELF! ONE DAY I'LL TELL HIM HE'S DONE ME A GOOD TURN ... AND THAT'LL TURN HIM GREEN!



CHAPTER 4. U-Boat's Doom

TWO DAYS LATER, CIRCLING WIDE OVER A LARGE TROOP CONVOY, THE CREW OF SKIP'S CATALINA SIGHTED THEIR FIRST SUBMARINE ... A SLIM, SINISTER SHAPE PLAINLY VISIBLE IN THE CLEAR, SUNLIT WATER.



SKIP M'GUIRE WAS IN NO DOUBT THIS TIME.

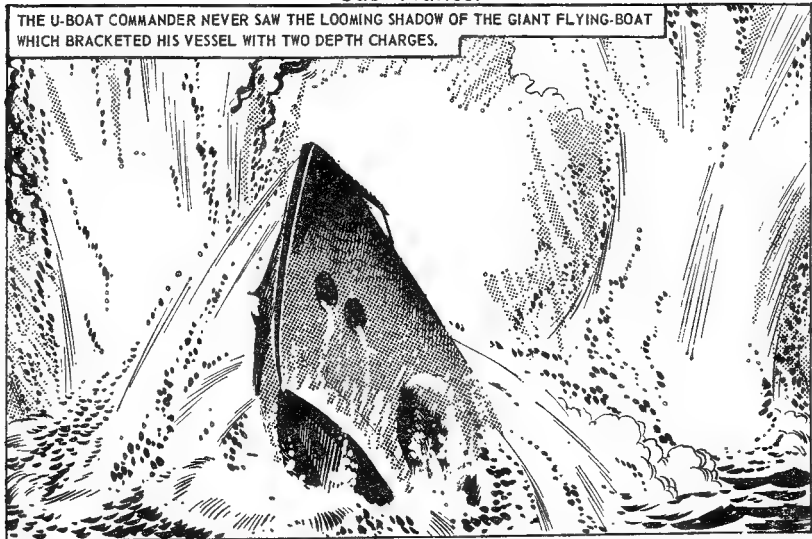
OF COURSE IT'S AN ENEMY SUB!
I'VE CHECKED THAT NONE OF OURS ARE
IN THE VICINITY. IT'S COMING UP
TO PERISCOPE DEPTH TO STALK OUR
CONVOY ... OTHERWISE IT'D BE CRAWLING ON
THE SEA BED! ANY MINUTE NOW AND IT'LL
BE LOOSING TORPEDOES!



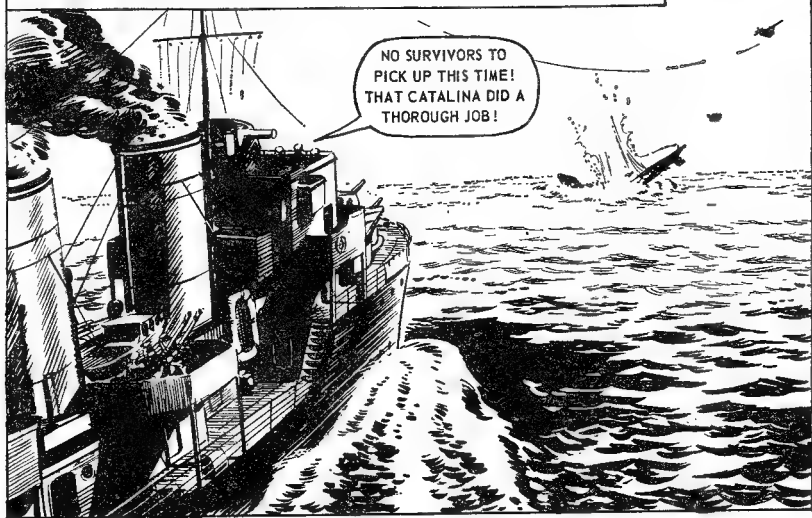
THE U-BOAT COMMANDER SWUNG HIS
PERISCOPE SLOWLY, HIS GAZE RIVETED ON
THE PRIZE WHICH MOVED MAJESTICALLY
ACROSS THE HORIZON.



THE U-BOAT COMMANDER NEVER SAW THE LOOMING SHADOW OF THE GIANT FLYING-BOAT WHICH BRACKETED HIS VESSEL WITH TWO DEPTH CHARGES.



A SPEEDING DESTROYER REACHED THE SCENE IN TIME TO SEE THE END OF THE U-BOAT.



NO SURVIVORS TO
PICK UP THIS TIME!
THAT CATALINA DID A
THOROUGH JOB!

SKIP M'GUIRE CARRIED ON WITH HIS PATROL, FEELING THAT SOMEHOW HE HAD ATONED FOR THE DISASTER OFF NORWAY.

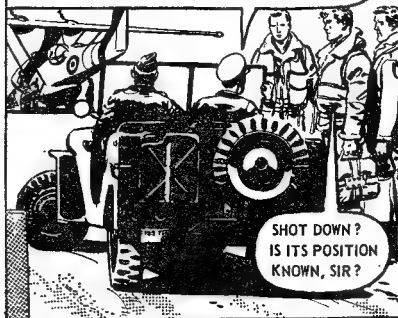


HOURS LATER THE CATALINA RETURNED TO BASE WITHOUT ANOTHER SIGHTING. BUT THERE WAS A JUBILANT PARTY THAT NIGHT. NEXT DAY, WHEN THE CREW WERE ABOUT TO START ANOTHER PATROL, EVERY MAN FELT ANOTHER U-BOAT 'KILL' AWAITED THEM UNTIL ...



SWIFTLY THE COLONEL EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD A CHANGE OF MISSION FOR SKIP'S CREW. HE HAD SENT RANKIN TO CAIRO IN A BOMBER WITH IMPORTANT SECRET PAPERS OUTLINING AIR DISPOSITIONS FOR THE COMING INVASION OF SICILY.

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT, THAT DARNED BOMBER GOT JUMPED BY JERRY FIGHTERS SOMEWHERE OVER THE DESERT. IT'S BEEN SHOT DOWN. I'VE GOT TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO RANKIN!



SHOT DOWN?
IS ITS POSITION
KNOWN, SIR?

NOPE! I'VE GOT EVERY PLANE I CAN SPARE LOOKING FOR THE WRECKAGE. BUT YOU'VE GOT WHEELS ON YOUR CAT ... AND A LONG RANGE. GET OUT THERE AND SEARCH, M'GUIRE! RANKIN MIGHT BE EXPENDABLE ... BUT THOSE SECRET PAPERS AREN'T!



RIGHT,
SIR!

THE CREW BROKE INTO A RUN FOR THE CATALINA ... BUT THE COLONEL HALTED SKIP M'GUIRE.



LISTEN, SON,
YOU AREN'T ALTOGETHER
IN CAHOOTS WITH RANKIN,
ARE YOU? HE HAD NO NEED
TO TELL ME YOU SANK
ONE OF YOUR OWN SUBS,
HAD HE?

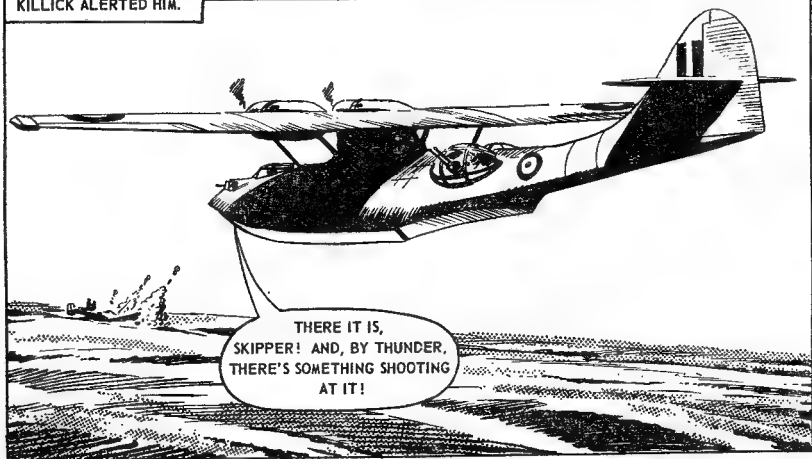
NO NEED, SIR ... BUT
THERE ARE OTHER MEN
OUT THERE BESIDES RANKIN,
AND I'LL DO MY BEST TO FIND
'EM ALL! AND THANKS FOR
GIVING US THE CHANCE
TO GET A U-BOAT!

GOOD LUCK, SON!
AND THERE'S NO NEED TO TELL
RANKIN THAT EVEN IF YOU
BRING HIM BACK I'LL BE LOOKING
FOR A NEW AIDE! I'VE
HAD ENOUGH OF RANKIN.

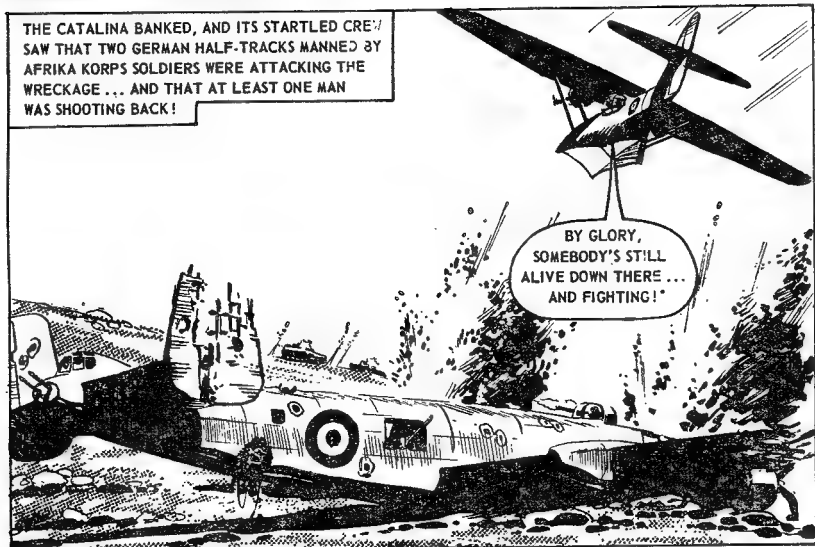


Sub Hunter

SKIP HAD BEEN TOLD THAT THE LOST BOMBER HAD TAKEN A COURSE DELIBERATELY DEEP INTO THE DESERT TO AVOID GERMAN FIGHTER ACTIVITY NEAR THE COAST. HE FLEW FIVE HUNDRED MILES ON QUARTERING COURSES OVER THE SUN-SCORCHED SAND AND ROCK BEFORE A SHOUT FROM SAILOR KILLICK ALERTED HIM.



THE CATALINA BANKED, AND ITS STARTLED CREW SAW THAT TWO GERMAN HALF-TRACKS MANNED BY AFRIKA KORPS SOLDIERS WERE ATTACKING THE WRECKAGE ... AND THAT AT LEAST ONE MAN WAS SHOOTING BACK!



FILLED WITH FURY, SKIP M'GUIRE SENT THE CATALINA ROARING DOWN, ITS TWIN MOTORS SHAKING THE DESERT WITH THEIR THUNDER.



THE CATALINA THUNDERED PAST, ITS WAIST GUNNERS POURING FIRE INTO THE GERMANS.



Sub Hunter

THE GERMANS WERE ROUTED, AND SKIP ASTONISHED HIS CREW BY TAKING THE CATALINA IN TO LAND ON SHIFTING SAND AND STONES.

BIT DICEY,
ISN'T IT, SKIPPER?
YOU MAY NEVER GET
OFF AGAIN!

WE'LL HAVE TO
CHANCE THAT. THE
CREW OF THAT WRECK
MAY BE BADLY
INJURED.



THE AIR GUNNER WHO HAD FOUGHT A LONE BATTLE AGAINST THE AFRIKA KORPS PATROL STOOD WAITING FOR THEM AS THEY RUSHED FROM THE HALTED CATALINA. RANKIN WAS WITH HIM.

BOY, AM I
GLAD TO SEE YOU FELLERS!
I WAS ALMOST OUT
OF AMMO!

TAKE ME AWAY
FROM HERE! YOU'VE GOT
TO TAKE ME ... MY ARM
AND MY LEG ARE BROKEN ... I
MUST HAVE MEDICAL
AID!



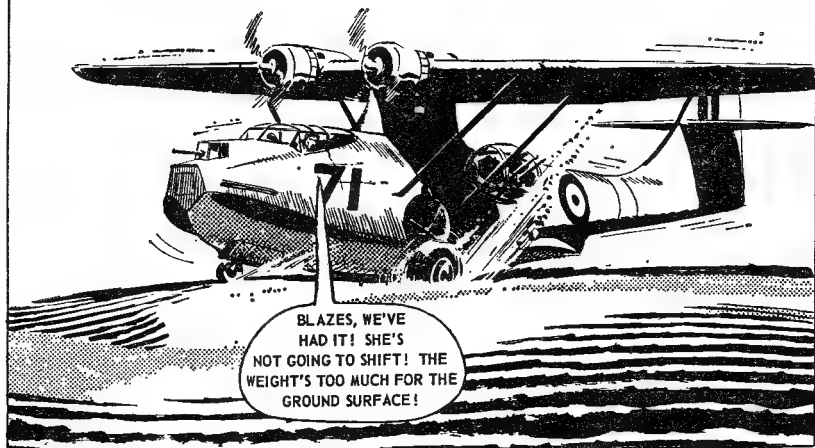


GENTLY THE CATALINA CREW CARRIED THE WOUNDED MEN, INCLUDING WING-COMMANDER RANKIN, TO THE AMPHIBIAN. THEY PERFORMED THE GRIM TASK OF BURYING THE DEAD MEN ... AND THEN SKIP M'GUIRE SET HIMSELF TO THE TASK OF GETTING THE HEAVY AIRCRAFT OFF THE GROUND.



Sub Hunter

BUT AS SKIP OPENED THE THROTTLES AND THE PROPELLERS BLASTED BACK A HURRICANE OF SAND, THE CATALINA ROCKED GENTLY ... AND DID NOT BUDGE.

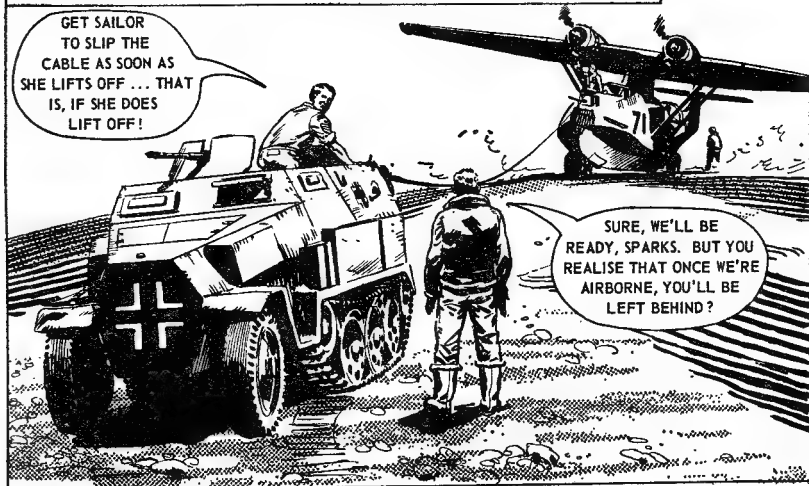


NEXT MOMENT SKIP FOUND SPARKS WALLIS, THE RADIO OPERATOR, BESIDE HIM.



WITHIN FIFTEEN MINUTES THE RADIO OPERATOR WAS READY TO PUT HIS DARING PLAN INTO OPERATION ... THE PLAN TO LIFT THE HEAVY CATALINA OFF THE GROUND.

GET SAILOR
TO SLIP THE
CABLE AS SOON AS
SHE LIFTS OFF ... THAT
IS, IF SHE DOES
LIFT OFF!



SURE, WE'LL BE
READY, SPARKS. BUT YOU
REALISE THAT ONCE WE'RE
AIRBORNE, YOU'LL BE
LEFT BEHIND?

I'LL TAKE MY CHANCE, SKIP.
YOU'VE GOT WOUNDED MEN ABOARD.
BESIDES, I FEEL I OWE YOU SOMETHING.
YOU SEE, BACK THERE OFF NORWAY, BEFORE
WE SANK THAT SUBMARINE, I WAS ASLEEP.
WENT RIGHT OFF. LOST THAT
ADMIRALTY SIGNAL ALTOGETHER. SO
YOU SEE ... WELL, I'M SORRY!

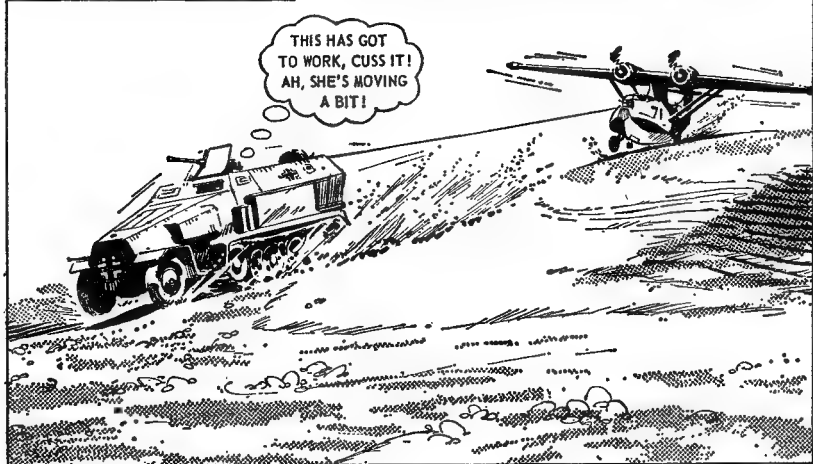


YOU SHOULD HAVE
TOLD ME, SPARKS. BUT, ANYWAY,
GOOD LUCK! I'LL SEE
YOU'RE PICKED UP!

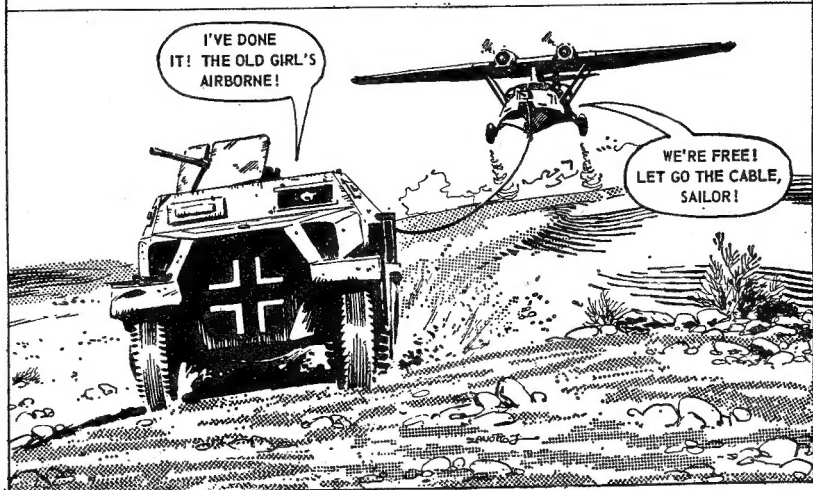
BUT AS HE WALKED SLOWLY TO THE AIRCRAFT ANOTHER THOUGHT STRUCK SKIP M'GUIRE.



SKIP SAID NO MORE. SPARKS WALLIS HAD PROVED HIMSELF IN WAR, AND THAT WAS ENOUGH FOR HIM. HE GUNNED THE THROTTLES OF THE GIANT FLYING-BOAT, AND SPARKS EDGED THE HALF-TRACK FORWARD, INCH BY INCH, TAKING THE STRAIN.



GRADUALLY THE CATALINA INCHED OUT OF THE SAND, ITS ENGINES ROARING. GRADUALLY THE HALF-TRACK INCREASED SPEED UNTIL SPARKS FOUND A HARD PATCH AND FELT THE VEHICLE MOVING FASTER.



AND SPARKS FELT THE WIND OF THE ROARING GIANT AS IT CLIMBED OVER HIM.



AIRBORNE, SKIP GOT THE NAVIGATOR TO WIRELESS ALL OTHER SEARCH PLANES WITH DETAILS OF SPARKS' POSITION, AND WHEN HE REACHED BASE THE CATALINA SKIPPER HEARD THAT HIS RADIO OPERATOR HAD BEEN PICKED UP BY A LIGHT SPOTTER PLANE WHICH HAD LANDED WITH EASE.

THANKS TO SPARKS, THOSE WOUNDED LADS HAVE GOT A GOOD CHANCE. HE DESERVES A MEDAL FOR THAT JOB, AND I'M GOING TO SEE HE GETS IT!



LATER, AFTER SPARKS HAD BEEN REUNITED WITH THE CREW AND SKIP M'GUIRE MADE HIS REQUEST TO COLONEL CULVER, HE RECEIVED A PERSONAL SURPRISE.

YOUR WIRELESS MAN'LL GET HIS CITATION, M'GUIRE. MEANWHILE, HERE'S NEWS FOR YOU. I'M SENDING RANKIN BACK TO THE UNITED KINGDOM ... HE'S MORE FITTED FOR A DESK JOB THAN AN OPERATIONAL COMMAND. YOU'RE MY NEW AIDE ... AND YOUR FIRST JOB IS TO DELIVER THESE PAPERS TO CAIRO, PRONTO!

A TRIP TO CAIRO! COLONEL, YOU'VE MADE MY DAY!



Printed in England by Fleetway Printers, 17 Sumner Street, London, S.E.1, and published each month by Fleetway Publications Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Subscription Rates: Inland £3.2.0 for 48 numbers. Overseas £3.0.0 for 48 numbers. Sole Agents: Australia and New Zealand, Gordon & Gotch, Ltd.; South Africa, Central News Agency, Ltd.; Rhodesia, Zambia and Malawi, Kingstons, Ltd. AIR ACE PICTURE LIBRARY is sold subject to the following conditions, that it shall not, without the written consent of the Publishers first given, be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of by way of Trade except at the full retail price as shown on the cover; and that it shall not be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of in a mutilated condition, or in any unauthorised cover by way of Trade; or affixed to or as part of any publication or advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever.

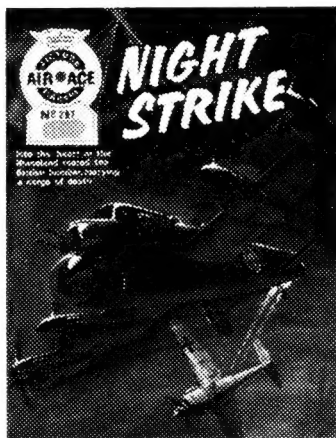
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SG

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No. 286 THUNDERBOLT!

It struck from the sky like
the crack of doom!



No. 288 GUNNERS' CHALLENGE

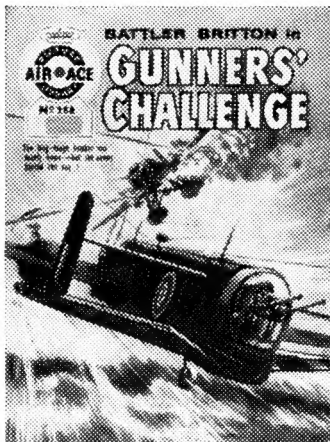
The long-range bomber was
nearly home—but the enemy
barred the way!

**NOW ON SALE—
BUY THEM TODAY!**



No. 287 NIGHT STRIKE

Into the heart of the Rhineland
roared the British bomber,
carrying a cargo of death.



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